

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Kansas City Power and Light Company Building

other names/site number Power and Light Building

**2. Location**

street & number 106 West 14<sup>th</sup> Street [ X ] not for publication

city or town Kansas City [ ] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64105

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  
[ X ] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the  
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In  
my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be  
considered significant [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [ X ] locally.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ]. )

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ]. )

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

[ ] entered in the National Register  
See continuation sheet [ ].

[ ] determined eligible for the  
National Register  
See continuation sheet [ ].

[ ] determined not eligible for the  
National Register.

[ ] removed from the  
National Register

[ ] other, explain  
See continuation sheet [ ].

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing.  
n/aNumber of contributing resources  
previously listed in the National  
Register.

n/a

**6. Function or Use****Historic Function**

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business

**Current Functions**

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business

**7. Description****Architectural Classification**

MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco

**Materials**

foundation Concrete

walls Stone

roof Glass

other Terra-cotta

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

☐ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

Property is:

☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ **B** removed from its original location.

☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.

☐ **D** a cemetery.

☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ **F** a commemorative property.

☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

Architecture

### Periods of Significance

1930-31

### Significant Dates

n/a

### Significant Person(s)

n/a

### Cultural Affiliation

n/a

### Architect/Builder

Hoit, Price & Barnes (Kansas City)

## Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☒ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☒ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

#

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

#

#### Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State Agency

☐ Federal Agency

☒ Local Government

☐ University

☐ Other:

Name of repository: Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission, City Hall.

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**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property Less than one acre**UTM References**

A. Zone Easting Northing  
15 362960 4328770

B. Zone Easting Northing

C. Zone Easting Northing

D. Zone Easting Northing

[ ] See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**name/title Cathy Ambler, Ph.D./Historian & Sally Schwenk/Partnerorganization Historic Preservation Services, LLC date August 23, 2002street & number 323 West 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 112 telephone 816-221-5133city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64105**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black-and-white photographs** of the property.**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Gailoyd Enterprises, c/o Steve Brettell, Property Mangerstreet & number The Winbury Group, 4520 Main St., Suite 1000 telephone 816-531-5303city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64111

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Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
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### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION<sup>1</sup>

The Kansas City Power and Light Company Building is a 30-story, 479-foot, steel-frame, rectangular office building sheathed in Indiana limestone and executed in the Art Deco style. Built in 1930-1931, it was designed by the Kansas City architectural firm of Hoyt, Price and Barnes. The structure's design features a telescoping, vertical perspective that is emphasized by its rectangular plan and a dramatic capping finial.<sup>2</sup> Its verticality is exaggerated by the use of wide pilasters that separate bands of vertical windows with recessed spandrels, characteristic of tall Art Deco office buildings. The building is situated on the northwest corner of 14th and Baltimore streets (1330 Baltimore). Low-rise modern buildings are located to the north and south, the National Register-listed President Hotel is to the east, and a surface parking lot is to the west. The structure has retained its highly significant visual and exterior integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. A photograph taken shortly after it was constructed reveals that almost no exterior changes have taken place over the years.

### ELABORATION

The primary façades, which have gray granite bases, are located on the east (Baltimore) and south (14th Street). The first two levels of these façades have five bays and seven bays, respectively. The east façade has fourteen bays from floor levels 3-15, twelve bays from levels 16-19, ten bays on levels 20-21, and six bays from levels 22-30. Windows, which determine the bays, are usually paired. As the building increases in height, step-backs located at the 16<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, and 31<sup>st</sup> floors reduce the number of bays or step back their location. The south façade has ten bays from levels 3-15, eight bays from levels 16-19, eight bays from levels 20-27, and six bays from levels 28-29. The east façade has a recessed, centrally located entrance, while the south façade has an entrance crowned by a cast-aluminum canopy with cut-glass panels located at the west end bay.<sup>3</sup>

The three-part replacement plate glass storefront display windows consist of a large center window flanked by slender sidelights and crowned by three-part black marble transoms. Above this window combination are second recessed windows, also three-part with arched transoms. The combination of windows on the first and second levels is framed in stone by an arched, carved, corner band of stylized suns, plant leaves, and a scroll design marking the upper corners of the arch in half relief. Between each street- and second-level window is a panel of five sections executed in bas-relief stone. These panels depict the powers of light and energy through imagery of dynamos, sunbursts, and flows of energy that radiate from vertical motifs.

This ornamental representation of energy is also displayed on the exterior cast-aluminum balcony railings as rising suns and rays of light. These balconies are at the 4<sup>th</sup> level and tend to define the lower floor areas. Bas-relief stone panels add texture and interest to the building and are located between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> floors on

<sup>1</sup> The building description is based, in part, on that prepared by Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission staff Melanie Betz for a draft National Register nomination dated March 4, 1988. The nomination was not submitted.

<sup>2</sup> Erlich, George. *Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, 1826-1990* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 96. Erlich notes the structure is square, but the plans show a rectilinear footprint.

<sup>3</sup> While building drawings call for cast iron, it appears instead that all the exterior metal trim is cast aluminum or perhaps nickel.

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both primary façades and on the east façade.<sup>4</sup> Similar panels are between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors. Decorative panels are repeated again between floors, before the step backs at the 15<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup> floors.

The most dramatic sunburst design, however, is above the centrally placed, two-story entrance on the east façade. This large recessed entrance consists of several parts including two pairs of replacement doors, an architrave of carved stone, a horizontal band of decorative metal panels and, above these, two rows of vertically divided metal casement windows. The entrance features a carved stone surround in the recessed area and a half-relief carved band of stylized suns, plant leaves, and a scroll design, which is similar to the corner band around the windows. The combination of the elaborate recessed entry and the stone sunburst above in the façade creates a dramatic entrance to the building's main hall.

Fenestration on the primary façade includes one-over-one light, double-hung sash, rectangular, steel-frame windows above the second level. All windows except the display windows are original, although some have been covered inside with a glare and heat reducing coating. Exaggerated verticality is projected by the use of wide pilasters separating pairs of windows with recessed spandrels. The pilasters terminate at the parapet, before the step backs, with characteristic Art Deco sculptural motifs of circles, suns, and inverted V-shaped configurations.<sup>5</sup> These sculptural and decorative details are organized to emphasize verticality and mark a strong visual transition as the structure steps back. This strong transition helps direct the eye to the glass pinnacle — the focal point that completes the composition of the building.

The secondary façades are on the west and north. Except for a service entrance and mechanical vents, the north façade has no fenestration on the first two levels. Above the second level, the pattern of bays follows that of the south façade. Except on levels 4-5, which were constructed for the auditorium with infill, fenestration on the north façade includes multi-sash rectangular windows and a few one-over-one light configurations.<sup>6</sup> The west façade has few windows because the bank of elevators is on this side of the structure. The first step back on the west façade occurs at the 29<sup>th</sup> floor. There are some louvered vents in window areas and some small windows on the south and north ends of the west façade.

The Kansas City Power and Light Company Building is crowned with a lighted lantern extending approximately six stories and topped with a steel-framed, multi-sided glass cupola. The entire building is lighted dramatically at night by flood lights concealed behind the step backs located at the 16<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, and 31<sup>st</sup> floors. The lantern features clear prismatic glass panels that form a giant sunburst radiating rays of energy. These windows are integrated into the limestone façade's sunburst pattern on each of the lantern's four sides. Featured at night by

<sup>4</sup> The function of such decorative panels according to the *American Architect* (May, 1931, pg. 398), was to soften otherwise severe surfaces and provide the eye rest from the gigantic power of the mass. These panels, the article argued, helped bring such tall buildings into human scale. Many of these panels, especially those closer to the street level, are of sunbursts.

<sup>5</sup> David Gebhard, *The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1996), 138.

<sup>6</sup> Several windows on the north and west façades have safety glass.

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alternating multi-colored spotlights that have focused on the building since construction, the lantern, lighted from within, remains a significant landmark in the Kansas City night sky.<sup>7</sup>

On the interior, the rectangular plan of the ground floor is divided into a large main floor hall with open space that has stairs and offices along the outside walls and an entry lobby with doors in the south façade. This lobby has the bank of elevators on the west side of the building. The main floor hall has mirrored marble staircases on the west end that lead to a second level open mezzanine balcony surrounding and overlooking the main floor. As on the exterior, Art Deco motifs adorn many surfaces on the main floor —square support columns, crown and ceiling beams and moldings, railings, radiator grills, metal elevator doors, and water fountains.

The theme throughout the main floor is "light and energy," which is captured through stylized suns, plant, and bird forms in aluminum, terra-cotta, and marble.<sup>8</sup> Sunbursts crown the elevator lobby doors. The main hall pilasters, capitals, and wide ceiling moldings are highly ornamented in terra-cotta with bas-relief deco designs. The first floor lobby walls are finished in light marble from the floor to the coved and lighted ceiling. Specially designed for the building, the lobby mailbox seems to radiate light as rays burst forth from an eagle. Original ceiling pendant lights help illuminate the main hall. The floor in the mail hall is marble and the lobby floor is emblazoned with sunbursts in terrazzo.

The first floor details that reflect the symbolic and exuberant theme of the building are rarely found in the upper floors. The upper level floors – floors 3 to 12 – are separated into an elevator lobby area and office space. From the 13<sup>th</sup> floor to the 28<sup>th</sup> floor, the elevator lobby and a service hall area form a T-shape. The interior finish of the upper levels was distinctly different in the elevator lobby areas than in office workspaces. Many upper floor elevator lobbies maintain thin sheets of the original mauve marble wainscoting and painted plaster or have more contemporary wood paneling and painted walls. The upper elevator lobby floors were usually two tones of terrazzo, in shades of mauve and brown or gray. Chevron patterns dominate the terrazzo elevator floor in front of the auditorium doors. Elevator doors were decorated with a sunburst motif on the outside and some retain this decoration. These elevator halls were finished nicely at construction, but simply and sparsely. Decoration was reserved for the more public spaces on the first floors. Some bathrooms in the building remain in their original condition with simple marble wainscoting, wooden doors, and black-and-white striped terrazzo flooring. Original office floors varied greatly, however, and were mostly plain or colored cement and linoleum. Still present in the gymnasium area is the unique, small, wooden block flooring positioned to expose the end grain.

<sup>7</sup> Newspapers articles of the time, such as one in the Kansas City Star on August 23, 1931, discussed the lighting of the tower at length, how color rotation worked, and the general impressive effect of the colors on the tower and on the public.

<sup>8</sup> Patricia Bayer, Art Deco Interiors (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), 155. Such stylized forms were typical in Art Deco buildings and Bayer mentions the Kansas City Power and Light Company Building specifically.

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Modest and restrained when constructed, the building's interior office work area features were practical and efficient. Most interior workspaces were and are finished with simple painted plaster walls and some were designed with movable metal partitions. These provided flexibility and reflect a simple, practical definition of space. While changes have occurred inside the building, its interior design was always intended to be less important than the exterior, which quickly gained a reputation as one of the nation's fine examples of American Art Deco architecture.



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## SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Kansas City Power and Light Company Building is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C as a distinctive example of Art Deco architecture in Kansas City and as a locally significant work of the Kansas City architectural firm, Hoit, Price and Barnes. It embodies the symbols of "progress" in a new, modern era and represents the Art Deco form in its simple, bold, stylized, and sculptural design elements. Upon completion in 1931, the Kansas City Power and Light Company Building became the tallest edifice in the State of Missouri, a distinction it held for over forty years. The building exemplifies the defining characteristics of the Art Deco style. Striving for originality and searching for modernity and artistic expression, the building complemented and expounded on the modern era of power and energy. According to architectural historian, George Ehrlich, the building is "... the most impressive 'High Rise' example of the modern style, and the most important achievement of Hoit, Price and Barnes. The Power and Light Building is to Kansas City what the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, and Rockefeller Center are to New York City."<sup>9</sup> Nationally, art and architectural historians recognize the building as one of the best examples of Art Deco architecture. The buildings period of significance is its construction date of 1930-1931.

## ELABORATION

### ART DECO STYLE IN THE UNITED STATES

The Kansas City Power and Light Company Building conveys feelings of and reflects associations with the Art Deco movement through its embodiment of the defining characteristics of the Art Deco style. Breaking with the revivalist tradition represented by Beaux Arts design, the Art Deco style originated in Europe and gained popularity in America in the late 1920s, becoming the first widely popular style in nearly three decades that departed from the traditional revival styles that Americans chose for their government, commercial, and institutional buildings. The style took its name from the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs and Industriels Modernes* held in Paris in 1925, which repudiated classical and revival styles and embraced artistic expression that complemented the modern machine age.<sup>10</sup> An emphasis on the future rather than the past was one of its defining characteristics, as was the use of straight lines in angular and geometric configurations. The lines tended to be unvaryingly plain and severe, with only hints or touches of decoration.<sup>11</sup> These characteristics transformed structures into linear, hard-edged, or angular compositions, as tall Art Deco buildings emphasized verticality. The façades of Art Deco buildings often employed a series of step backs as they grew taller, emphasizing geometric form. Strips of windows with bas-relief decorated or recessed spandrels also emphasized the vertical composition. Ornamentation utilized stylized reeds, flora, and geometric motifs such as chevrons, zigzags, and fluting executed in terra-cotta or stone, but had very little depth or

<sup>9</sup> Melanie Betz, "Kansas City Power and Light Company Building" National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, March 4, 1988 citing Oral Interview with George Ehrlich, Ph.D., Professor of Art and Architectural History, University of Missouri, Kansas City, March 9, 1988.

<sup>10</sup> S. Allen Chambers, John Popelier, Nancy B. Schwartz, *Art Deco, What Style Is It?* (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1983), 88.

<sup>11</sup> Gebhard, 4.

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projection. Taken simplistically, tall Art Deco buildings were vertical shafts composed of alternating vertical bands with recessed windows and spandrels.<sup>12</sup>

The interior of public spaces of many large Art Deco buildings employed thin sheets of rare and expensive polished stone (such as marble) that produced the effect of wallpaper or a painted mural — just a skin covering the frame of the structure. Even finely surfaced concrete was used for sheathing. Numerous metal alloys were used in mixtures of steel, bronze, nickel, silver, platinum, lead, and zinc for elevator doors, window frames, spandrels, decorative panels, and sculpture. Lightweight aluminum also came into its own in these years and architects were fascinated with it for its own qualities and as a substitute for other materials.<sup>13</sup> Ornamentation concentrated principally on the most used and public areas, i.e., entranceways, exterior grillwork, doors, vestibules, and banks of elevators.<sup>14</sup> However, as noted by author Patricia Bayer “Art Deco architecture is of the buildings themselves, of their inherent qualities and of their spirit, energy and visual impact, not of their internal structures, services, floor plans and front and side elevations.”<sup>15</sup>

The Kansas City Power and Light Company Building reflects these parameters. Its setbacks extending over half the total building height, its capping finial, and its use of recessed window spandrels project an image of exaggerated verticality. This coupled with the use of geometrical stylized and sculptural motifs symbolizing the powers of light and energy, not only incorporates the basic elements of the style but also reflects a sophisticated and dramatic execution.

**THE KANSAS CITY POWER AND LIGHT COMPANY BUILDING**

**Kansas City Power and Light Company**

The Kansas City Power and Light Company originated as the Kawsmouth Electric Light Company, which opened the first central station electric plant in Kansas City in 1882. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the company survived the intense competition that prevailed in a city with costly duplicate power lines and newly formed private utilities. Its survival, in part, was due to the purchase of the electric company by meatpacking baron J. Ogden Armour in 1900 to power the city's expanding electric streetcar system. Armour's plan centered on the use of electricity for streetcars during daytime hours and the consumption of energy for street lamps and private lighting during nighttime hours. Thus, the equipment installed to generate and deliver electricity could operate and earn money on a round-the-clock basis. However, the combined financial collapse of the street railway system and the electric company led to receivership and, by court order, the companies became separate entities. In 1916, the electric company assembled a management team that focused on developing a modern electric system. In 1921, they completed the main part of Northeast Power Station, enabling the firm to serve customers from their own resources. The following year, the corporation changed its name to the Kansas City Power and Light Company.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>14</sup> Alastair Duncan, *American Art Deco*. (London: Thomas and Hudson, 1986), 148.

<sup>15</sup> Patricia Bayer, *Art Deco Architecture*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 12. Bayer notes that The Kansas City Power and Light Company Building was a gleaming gem, whose sunburst and scrolled tower was topped by a glazed pyramid that glowed orange.” Note: the color changed and included variations on orange and green and white.

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During the next four decades, the company expanded its service area to a 4,700-square-mile territory, establishing Kansas City as a major hub for electric power transmission from one geographic area to another.<sup>16</sup>

The construction of the Kansas City Power and Light Company Building in 1930-1931 was a result of the consolidation of the Kansas City Power and Light Company's offices, which were previously located in several different buildings. Company president, Joseph Franklin Porter, was largely responsible for this consolidation, as well as for the selection of the architectural firm of Hoit, Price and Barnes to design the new building.<sup>17</sup> The Kansas City Power and Light Company used the first nineteen floors and leased the upper floors to other businesses. In 1957, the Kansas City Power and Light Company sold the building and leased back thirteen floors. Today the building is leased to a variety of tenants.

**Hoit, Price and Barnes, Architects**

The architectural firm of Hoit, Price and Barnes was well known in Kansas City. The firm's origins date to 1902 when Henry Ford Hoit (1872-1951) arrived in Kansas City to join the prominent partnership of Henry Van Brunt and Frank Howe. After Van Brunt died in 1903, Howe made Hoit a partner along with William H. Cutler. The firm designed the 1906 R. A. Long Building, an early Kansas City skyscraper. Cutler's death in 1907 and Howe's death in 1909 left Hoit as the principal architect. One of his draftsmen, Edwin M. Price (1885-1957), became his partner in 1913. Another draftsman, Alfred E. Barnes, Jr. (1892-1960), became a partner in 1919. That year the firm changed its name to Hoit, Price and Barnes and remained active until 1941.<sup>18</sup>

Hoit, Price and Barnes played a significant role in the development of Kansas City architecture between World War I and World War II. The firm received numerous commissions for buildings located in the Downtown Central Business District of Kansas City. Among them were the Kansas City Athletic Club (1918, 1922-1923); the Dierks Building (1925, 1929-1930); the Southwestern Bell Telephone addition (1929); and the Fidelity Bank and Trust Company Building (1930). Their most significant contribution to the architectural fabric of the city was the Kansas City Power and Light Company Building (1930-1931).

Henry F. Hoit was born in Chicago in 1872. He graduated the Chicago Manual Training School in Chicago in 1892. In 1897, he graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where his architectural training emphasized the classical design precepts of the Ecole des Beaux-arts in Paris. That year he received a prize from the Boston Society of Architects. Following his graduation, he worked for the Boston design firm of Van Brunt and Howe. Hoit came to Kansas City in 1902 to design the Palace of Varied Industries Building at the St. Louis World's Fair.

<sup>16</sup> Sherry Lamb Schirmer and Richard D. McKinzie. At The River's Bend: An Illustrated History of Kansas City, Independence and Jackson County (Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publications, Inc. in association with the Jackson County Historical Society, 1982), 311.

<sup>17</sup> Giles C. Mitchell, There Is No Limit (Kansas City, Missouri: Brown-White Co., 1934), 93-94 and Kansas City Star, July 12, 1931.

<sup>18</sup> "Kansas City Power and Light Company Building," excerpt from the "Art of the Tall Building," an exhibit, Jan. 25- March 1, 1985, and information poster prepared by George Ehrlich, Ph.D.

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Prior to receiving the commission to design the Kansas City Power and Light Company Building in 1930, Hoit participated in the design of the R. A. Long Building, R. A. Long residence, Southwestern Bell Telephone Building, Temple B'nai Jehudah, Longview Farm, Independence Boulevard Christian Church, Robert Keith Furniture Building, and K.C.A.C. Building. He was a Mason and a member of the K.C. Architectural League and the Kansas City Art Institute. In 1938, Hoit received a fellowship from the American Institute of Architects for professional leadership and accomplishment. At that time, Courtland Van Brunt, Mr. Hoit's first employer in Kansas City, was the only other living Kansas City architect to hold the honor.<sup>19</sup>

Edwin M. Price, a native of Webb City Arkansas, was born in 1885. He attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He worked for Henry Hoit as a draftsman and in 1913 became a partner in the firm. Price took an active role in the design of the company's major commissions. His obituary notes that one of his greatest challenges was the design of the lantern effect at the top of the Kansas City Power and Light Company Building. He also played a significant role in the design of the Municipal Auditorium, in association with the architectural firm of Gentry, Voskamp and Neville.<sup>20</sup>

Alfred Edward Barns, Jr. was born in Kansas City, Missouri in 1892. The grandson of early Kansas City architect A. B. Crosse and the son of an architect, he aspired to become a civil engineer. He began his career as a draftsman in the office of Henry Hoit in 1909. In 1919, he joined Hoit and Price as a partner. In 1936, he served as president of the Kansas City American Institute of Architects. During World War II, Barns was the coordinating engineer at the Lake City Arsenal in eastern Jackson County.<sup>21</sup>

**Building Design Analysis**

According to architectural historian, George Ehrlich, the Kansas City Power and Light Company Building was "a deliberate and clear statement of the modern style."<sup>22</sup> Exhibiting Art Deco design, it was the tallest building in the State of Missouri for many years. Its simple, bold, stylized, and sculptural motifs symbolize light and energy, as represented by variations on a sunburst design. The most dramatic sunburst design is above the east façade entrance. On the interior, variations of the sunburst design executed in terra-cotta, marble, and tile carry out the theme of light and energy. Sunbursts crown each interior door on the lower level and the elevators. Ceiling beams, pilasters, and capitals have highly ornamented bas-relief sunburst designs. The terrazzo lobby floors also display the sunburst motif. The extensive use of electrical power that represents the actual function of the building reinforces the design motif of light and energy. Floodlights concealed by the set backs and the multi-colored lights of the crowning lantern provide a dramatic display of light at night. At the time of construction, the building consumed the equivalent electrical power of a community of six thousand.<sup>23</sup>

Affecting the design of the modern high-rise building was a change in building code in the early 1920s. Kansas City's 1923 zoning ordinance, in an effort to ensure adequate light and air, required set backs on high-rise buildings.

<sup>19</sup> "Henry F. Hoit Is Dead," *Kansas City Star*, May 30, 1951, 3.

<sup>20</sup> "Edwin M. Price Is Dead," *Kansas City Star* January 11, 1957, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Mitchell, 88 and *Kansas City Times*, May 12, 1960, 30.

<sup>22</sup> Betz, citing Oral Interview with George Ehrlich, March 9, 1988.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 9

Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO

The law thus determined the basic form and massing of tall buildings in Kansas City. Modeled after New York City's 1916 ordinance, Kansas City's code allowed high towers but required predetermined set-back levels and dictated the size/area of the tower by a formula keyed to the overall size of the lot.<sup>24</sup>

Nationally, the building is honored as one of the best examples of Art Deco architecture. In Rediscovering Art Deco U.S.A.: A Nationwide Tour of Architectural Delights, the authors note that "the building quickly became Kansas City's leading landmark" and "this tower... is a great treasure for the city and should be proudly maintained."<sup>25</sup> The well-known writer on Art Deco architecture, Patricia Bayer, in her book Art Deco Architecture, stated that the "KCPL building was a gleaming gem, whose sunburst and scrolled tower was topped by a glazed pyramid that glowed orange." She also noted the building's public space had an interior that qualified it as one of the outstanding Art Deco edifices in the country.<sup>26</sup> Alastair Duncan, in American Art Deco, observed that Kansas City was a mecca for the unheralded Art Deco architecture and that "the prize is the Kansas City Power and Light Company Building, which has retained its spectacular illuminated tower and almost all of the metal ware in its lobby."<sup>27</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

The Kansas City Power and Light Company Building clearly exemplifies the defining characteristics of the Art Deco style and gained national attention as one of the best examples of this style. Striving for originality and searching for modernity and artistic expression, the building complemented and expounded on the modern era of power and energy. Because of its extremely high level of integrity, it conveys feelings of its period of significance and communicates its strong associations with the Art Deco Style. It has long been considered by art and architectural historians to be the definitive work of the architectural firm of Hoit, Price and Barnes and, in particular, reflects associations with the design work of Hoit and Price. As such, it clearly merits listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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<sup>23</sup> Mitchell, 95-96.

<sup>24</sup> Ehrlich, 94.

<sup>25</sup> Barbara Capitman, Michael D. Kinerk, and Dennis W. Wilhelm. Rediscovering Art Deco U.S.A.: A Nationwide Tour of Architectural Delights (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1994), 110-111.

<sup>26</sup> Bayer. Art Deco Architecture, 12, and Patricia Bayer, Art Deco Interiors, 154-55.

<sup>27</sup> Duncan, 198.

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National Park Service

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Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO

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**Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO**

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

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Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Lots 1 thru 4, Block F, Reid's Addition, Second Resurvey, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundary for the Kansas City Power and Light Company Building includes the city lots on which the building was erected and has historically been associated.



**United States Department of the Interior  
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Continuation Sheet**

**Photograph Sheet Page 1**

**Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO**

**PHOTO LOG**

Photographer: Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography, Kansas City, Missouri

Date of Photographs: August 2002

Location of Negatives: Gailoyd Enterprises, c/o Steven Brettell, The Winbury Group, Kansas City, Missouri

- 1) South and east elevations. View looking northwest.
- 2) East and north elevations. View looking southwest.
- 3) West and south elevations. View looking northeast.
- 4) Baltimore Avenue (east) elevation and entrance. View Looking southwest.
- 5) 14<sup>th</sup> Street entrance. View looking north.
- 6) Typical treatment of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> story windows. View looking north.
- 7) Typical balcony detail. View looking north.
- 8) Typical set-back detail. View looking north.
- 9) Rooftop lantern. View looking north.
- 10) Elevator lobby. View looking northwest.
- 11) Elevator lobby. View looking northeast.
- 12) Baltimore Avenue entrance, interior detail. View looking east.
- 13) Main hall and mezzanine. View looking northeast.
- 14) Main hall and mezzanine, typical detail.
- 15) Main hall and mezzanine, typical ceiling detail.
- 16) 4<sup>th</sup> floor corridor. View looking east.
- 17) Typical corridor. View looking northwest.

7062 11 NW  
(PARKVILLE)

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

360000m E. 2 960 000 FEET (KANS.) R. 25 E. R. 33 W.

94° 37' 30" 39° 07' 30"



362

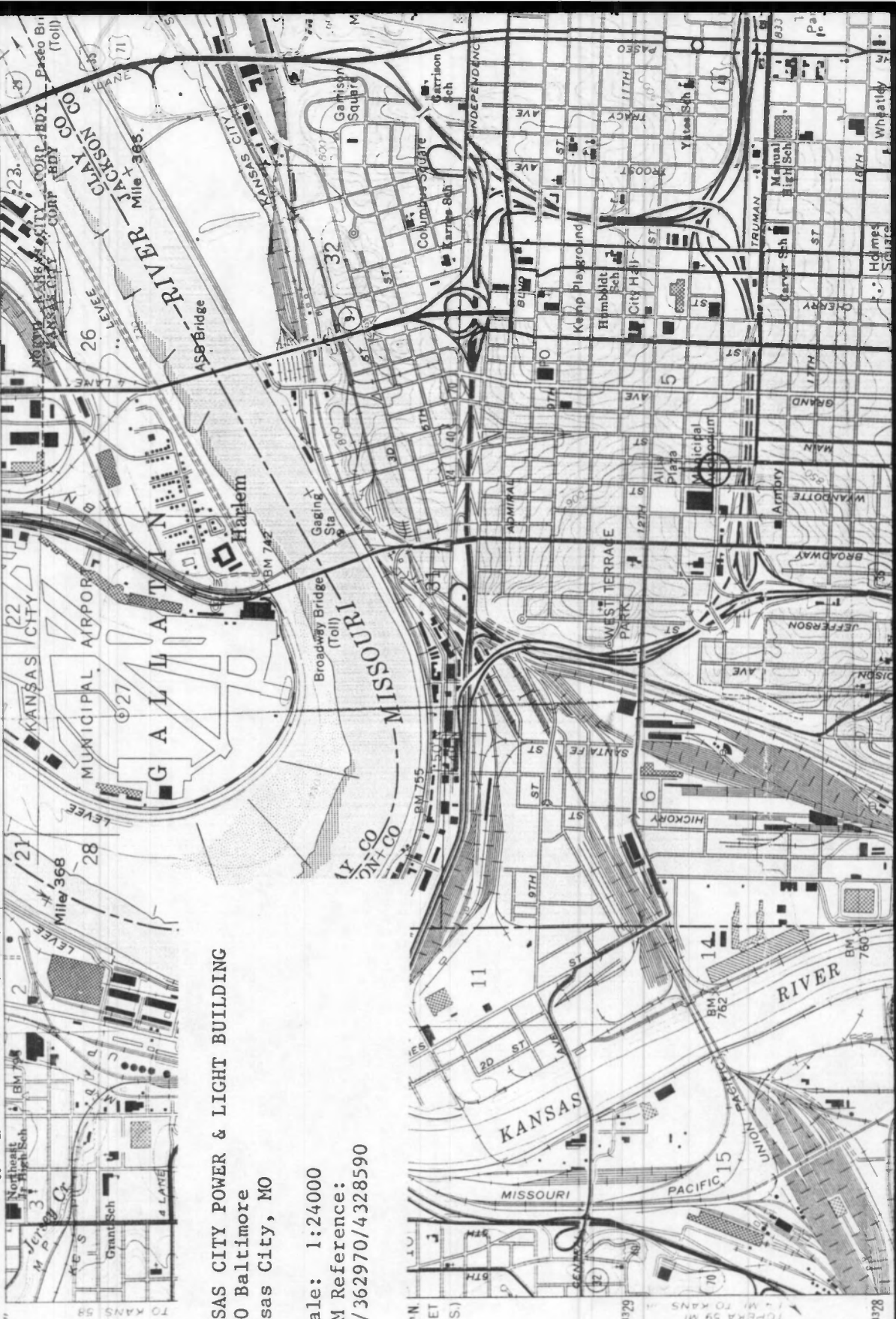
363 35'

ST. JOSEPH 50 MI.  
4 MI. TO INTERSTATE 29

ST. JOSEPH  
3.1 MI. TO J.  
7062  
(NORTH KANSAS)

KANSAS CITY POWER & LIGHT BUILDING  
1330 Baltimore  
Kansas City, MO

Scale: 1:24000  
UTM Reference:  
15/362970/4328590



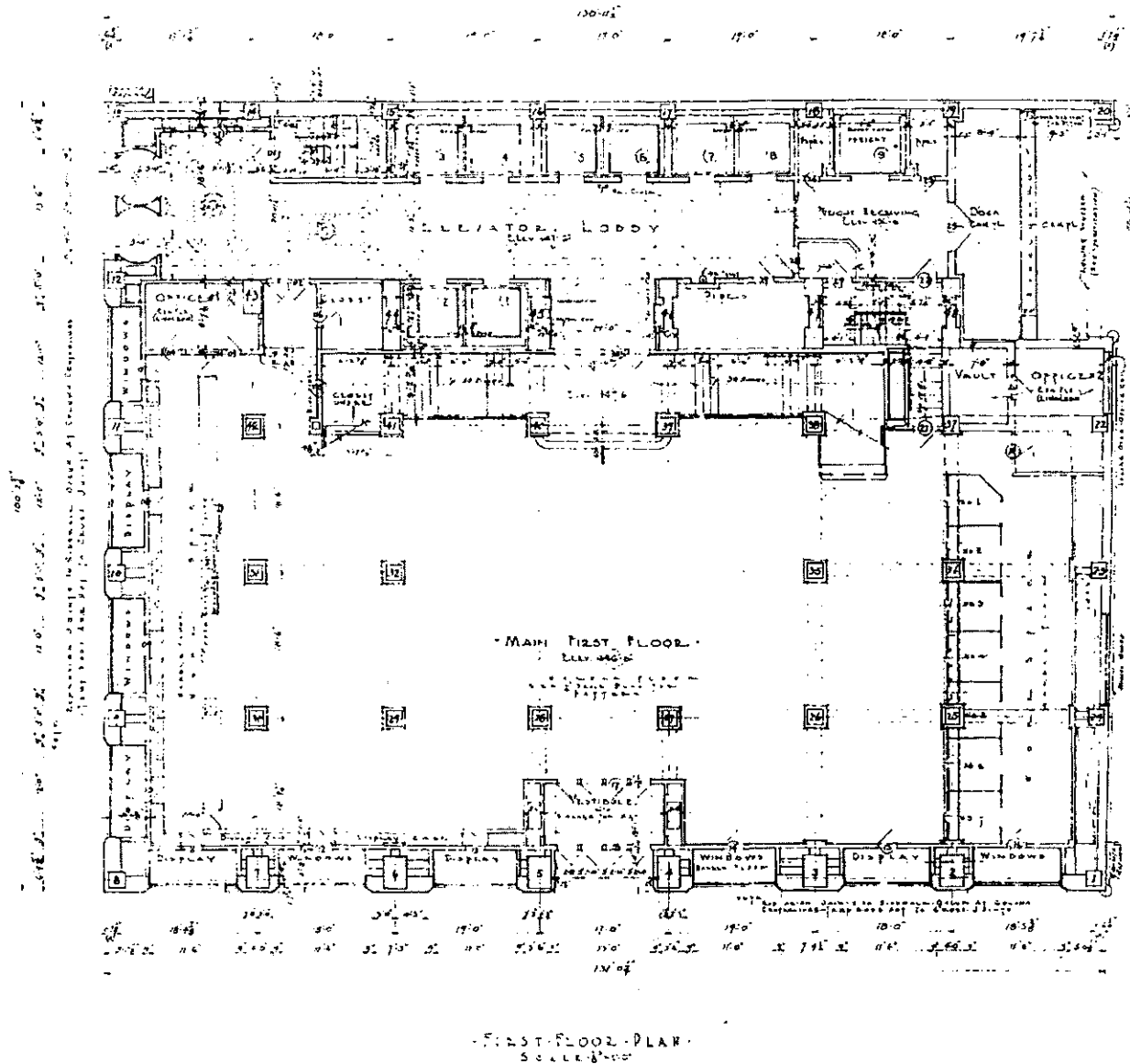
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Original Plan Page 2

Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO

FLOOR PLANS — 1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR



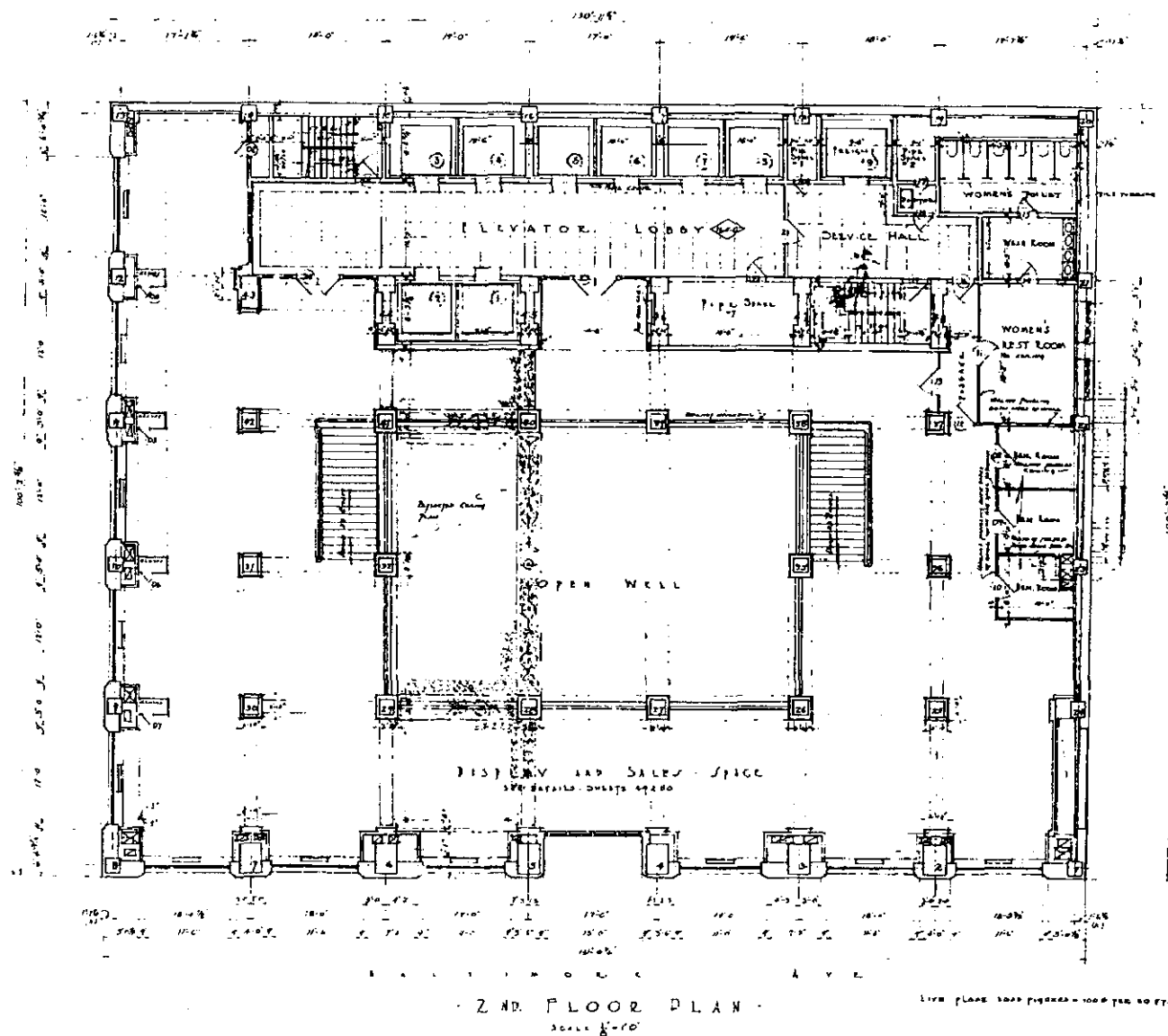
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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Original Plan Page 3

Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO

FLOOR PLANS — 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR



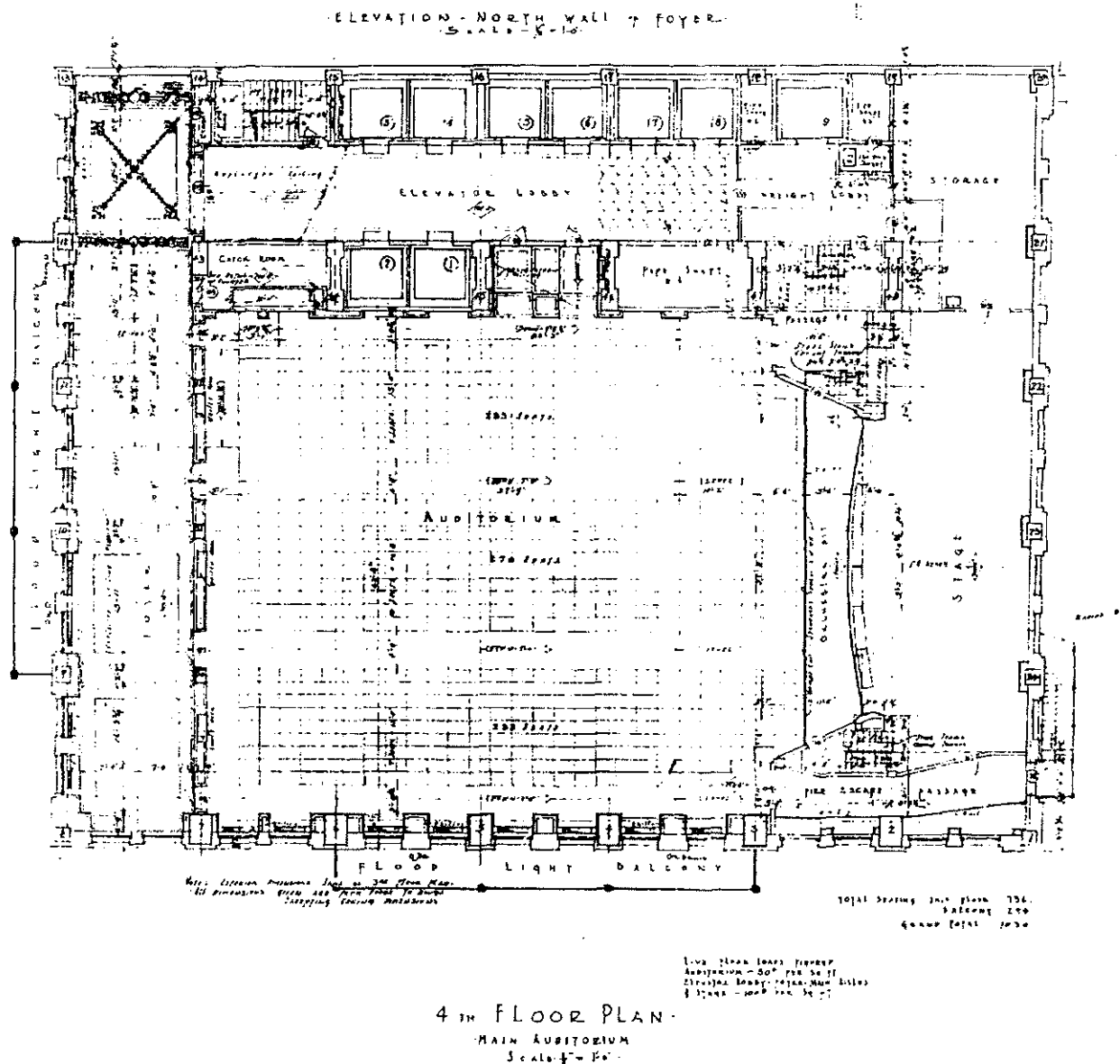
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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Original Plan Page 4

Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO

FLOOR PLANS — 4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR



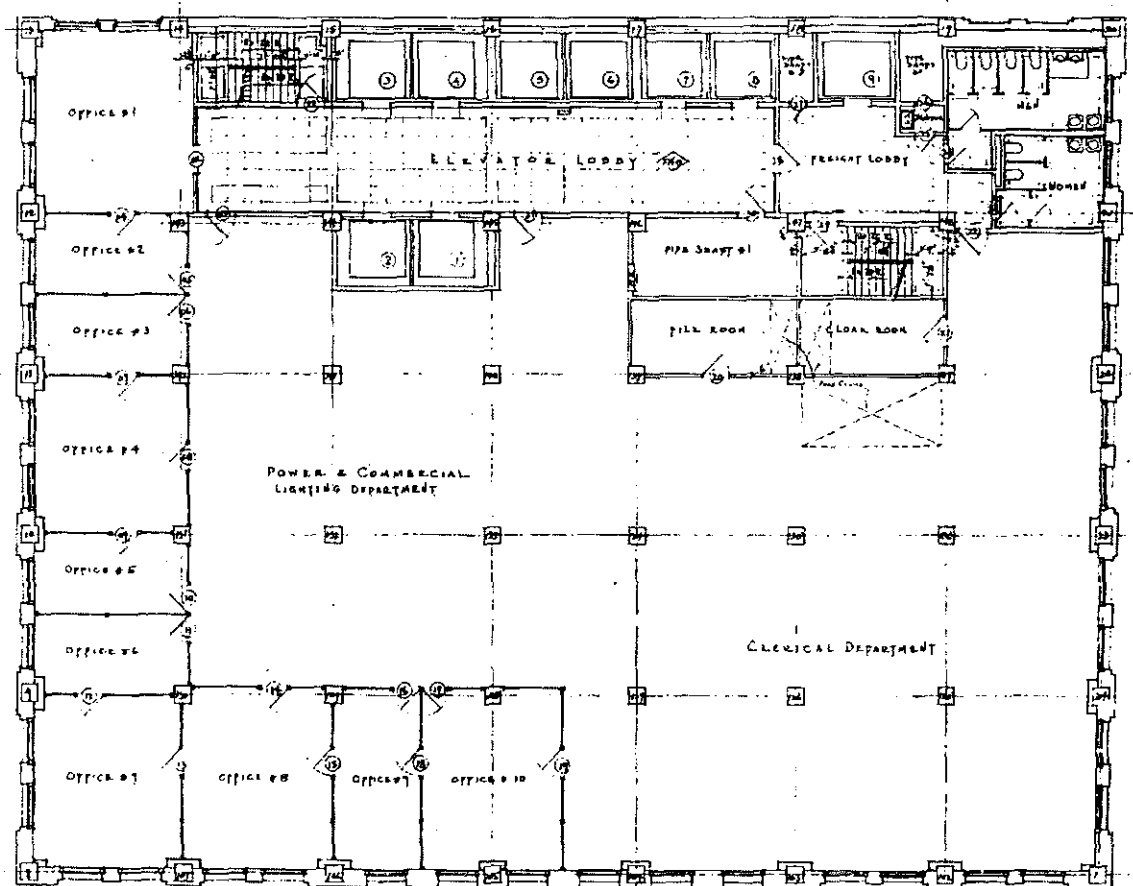
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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Original Plan Page 5

Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO

FLOOR PLANS — 10<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR



10<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR PLAN  
1/8" = 1'-0"

10<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR, LARGE VIEWER  
PILL ROOM - 3000 PHS. DEPT.  
REST OF FLOOR - 3000 PHS. DEPT.

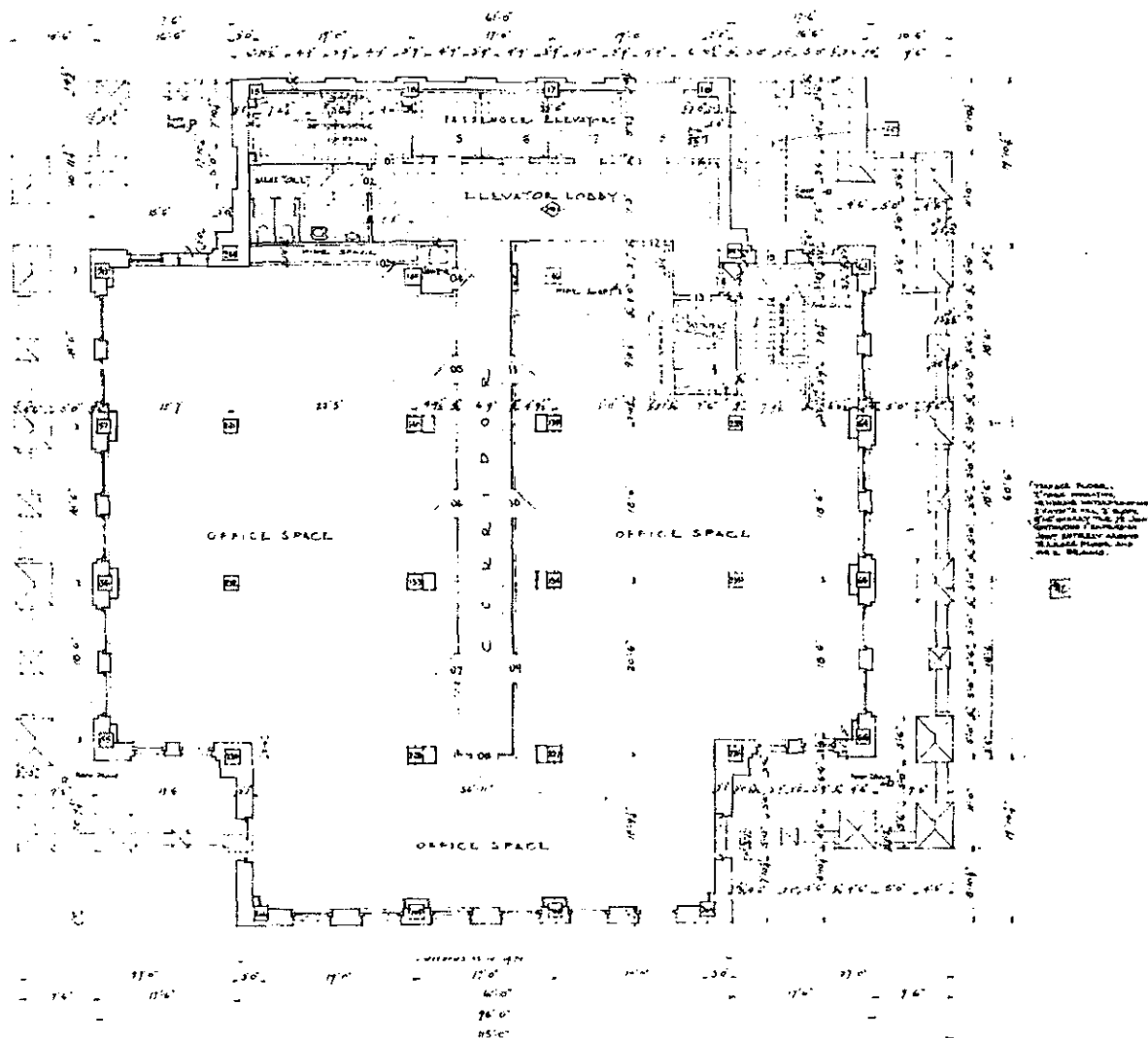
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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Original Plan Page 6

Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO

FLOOR PLANS — 20<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR



20<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

PLUMBING, ELEC. SYMBOLS  
OFFICE SYMBOLS SEE PLAN 1011

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

**Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO**

[illegible]

22ND FLOOR PLAN.  
Sentry - Po.



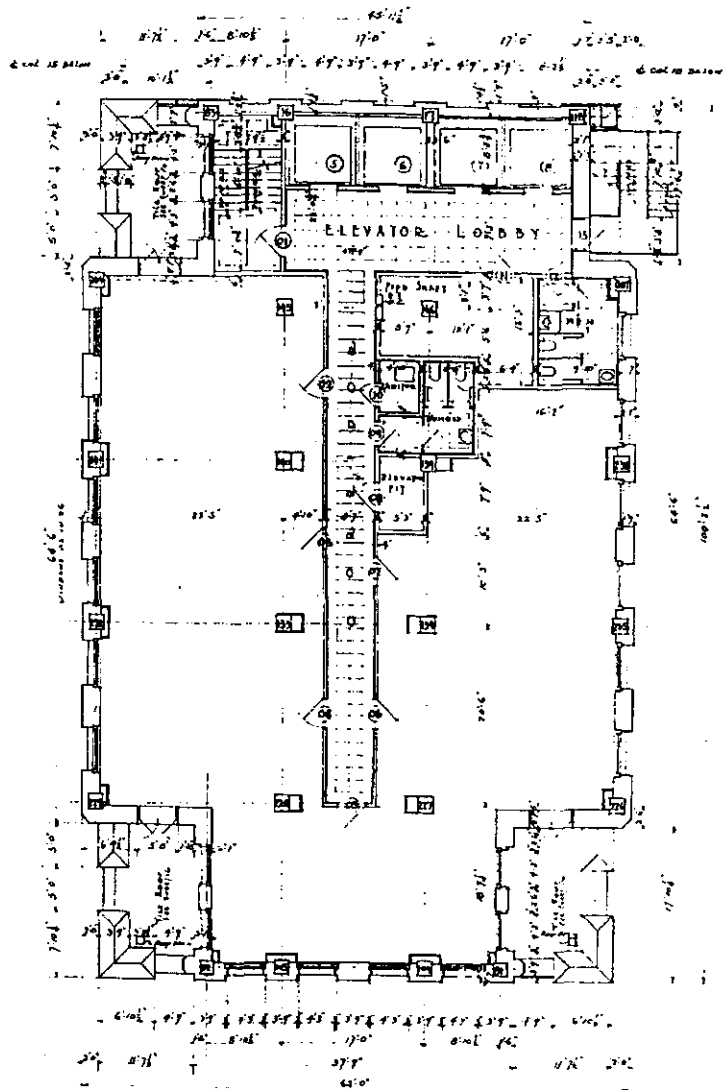
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Original Plan Page 8

Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO

FLOOR PLANS — 27<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR



Line floor plan prepared by J. H. Smith

27<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR PLAN  
Scale - 1/4" = 1'-0"

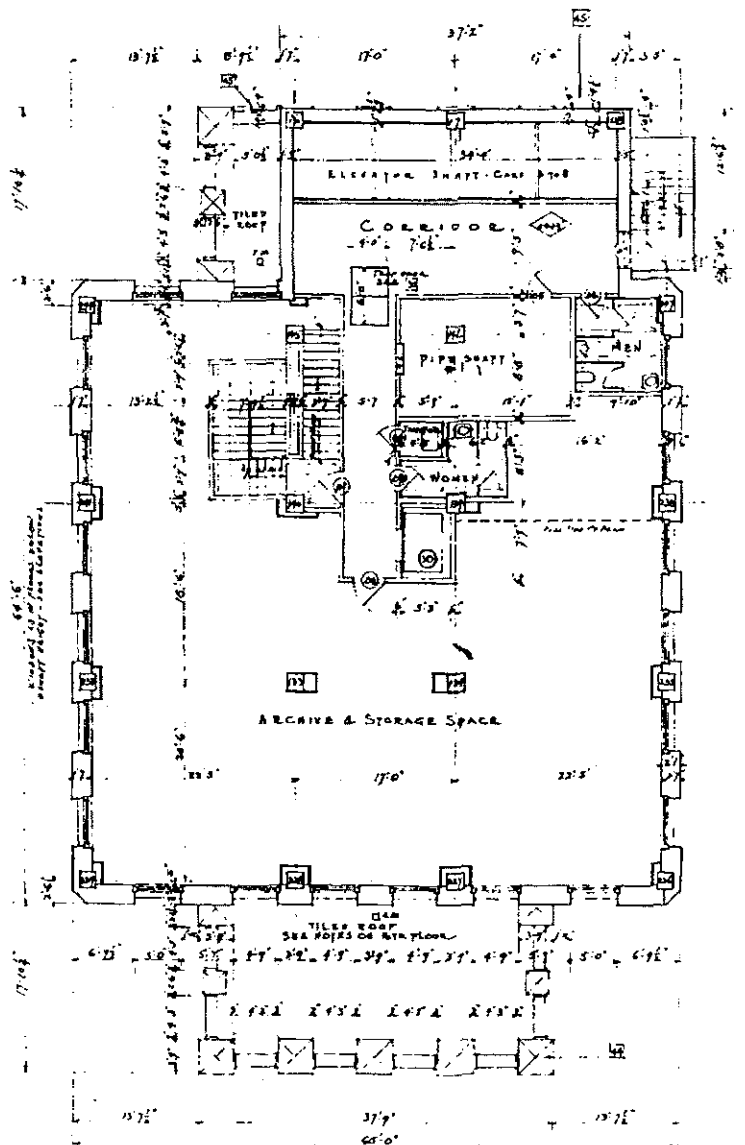
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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Original Plan Page 9

Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO

FLOOR PLANS — 29<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR



29<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR PLAN  
1/8" = 1'-0"

LIVE FLOOR LOADS FIGURED  
ARCHIVE & STORAGE - 150# PER SQ. FT.

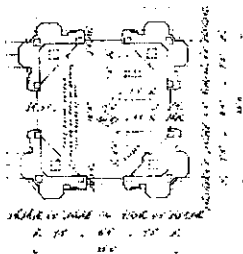
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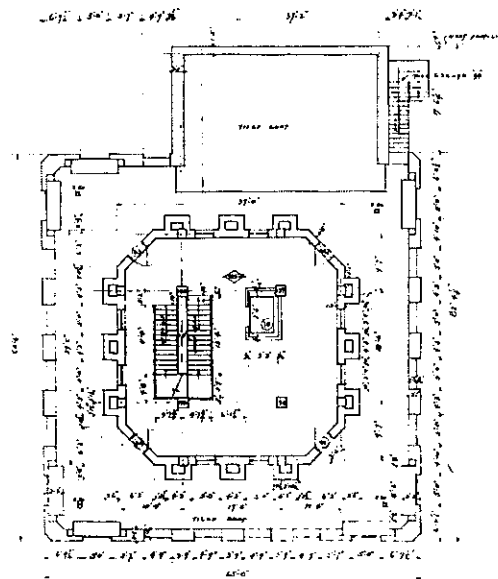
Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO

FLOOR PLANS — 31<sup>ST</sup>–33<sup>RD</sup> FLOORS

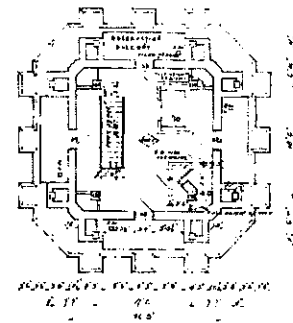


33<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR PLAN  
(See plan of basement)

FOR DATA FLOOR (SEE PLAN OF BASEMENT)  
SEE LEGEND, SYMBOLS, DIMENSIONS OF SAMPLES  
SHOWN ON 41



31<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR PLAN  
(Main floor and the plan of basement)



32<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR PLAN  
(See plan of basement)

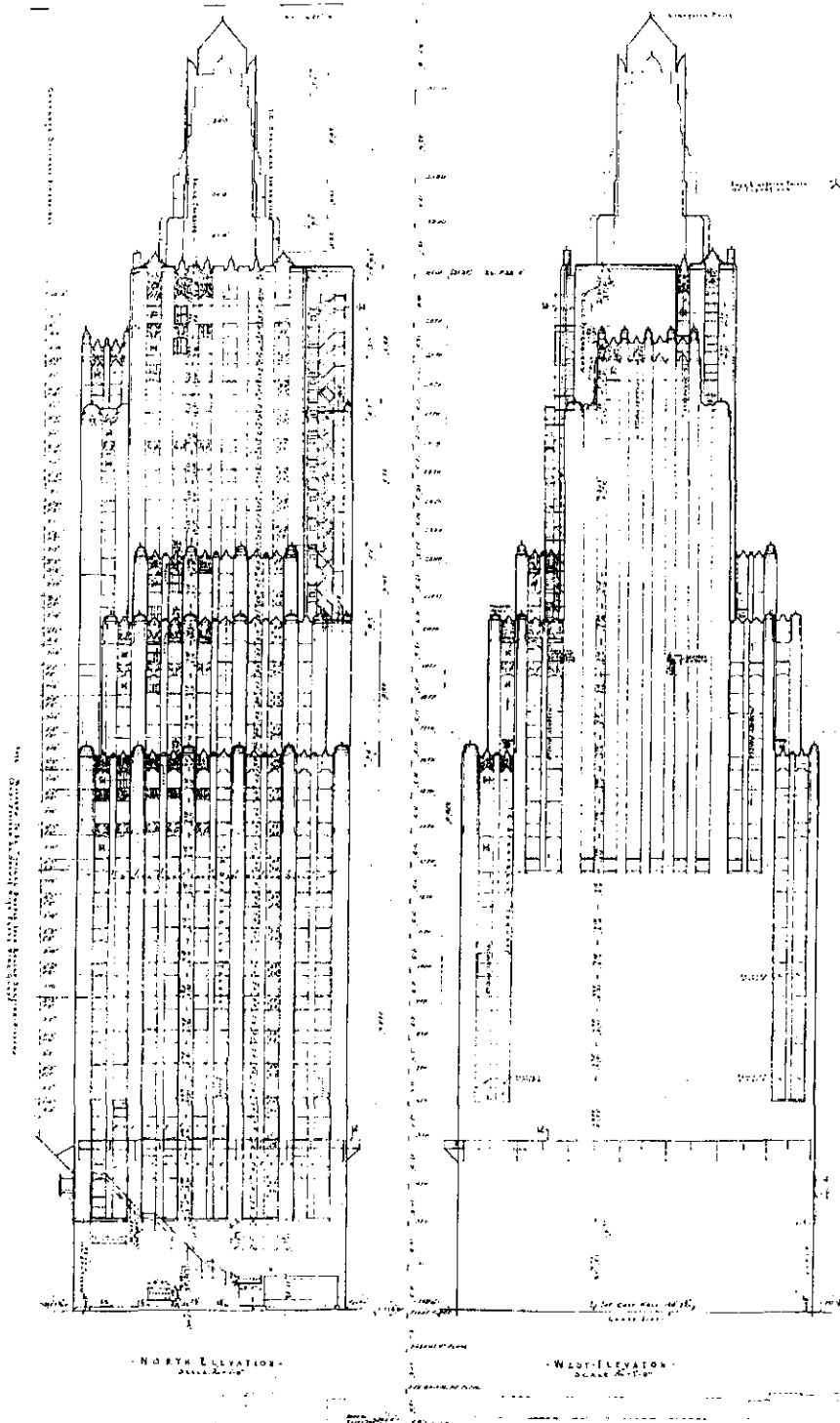
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Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO

NORTH AND WEST ELEVATIONS



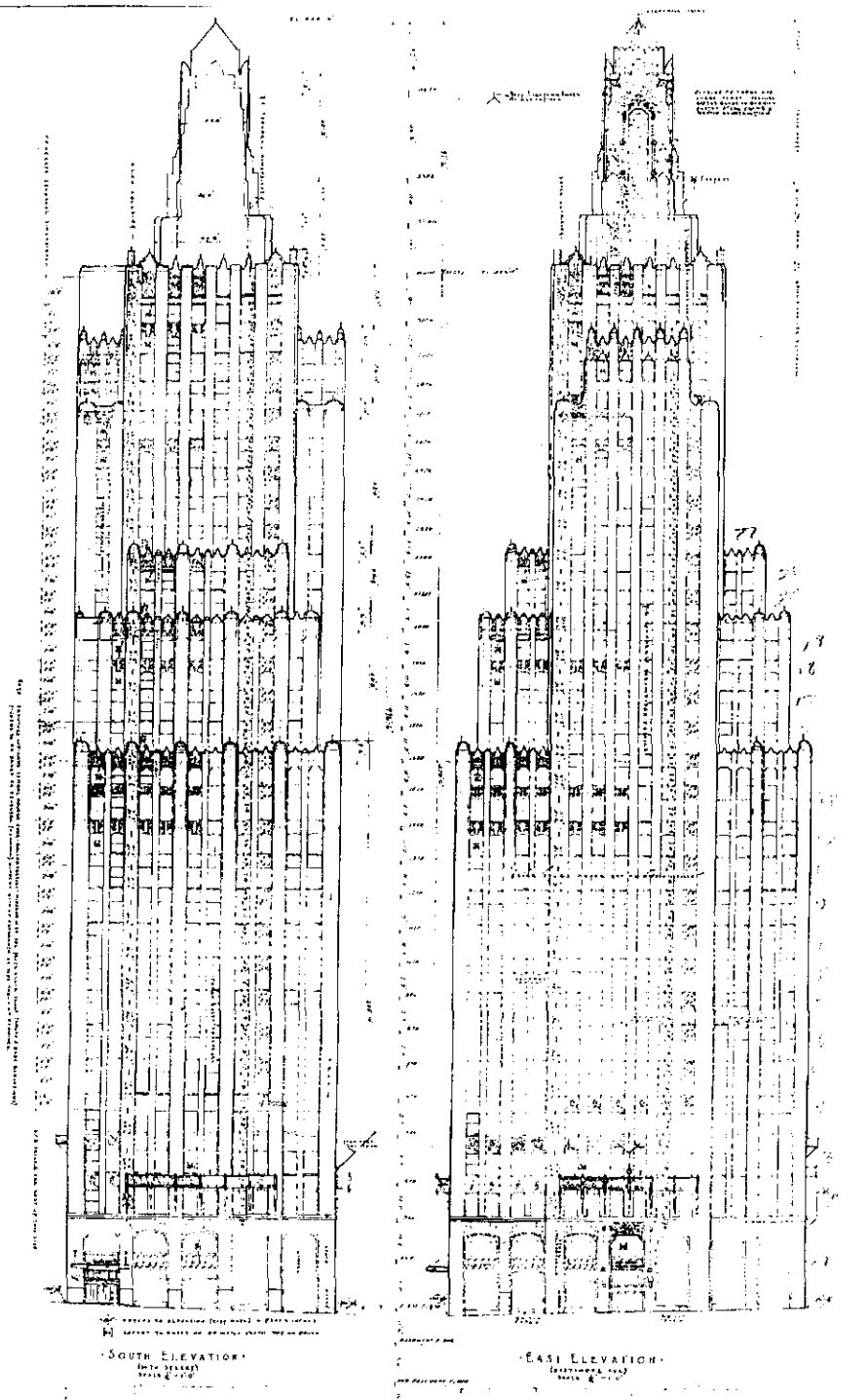
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Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO

SOUTH AND EAST ELEVATIONS



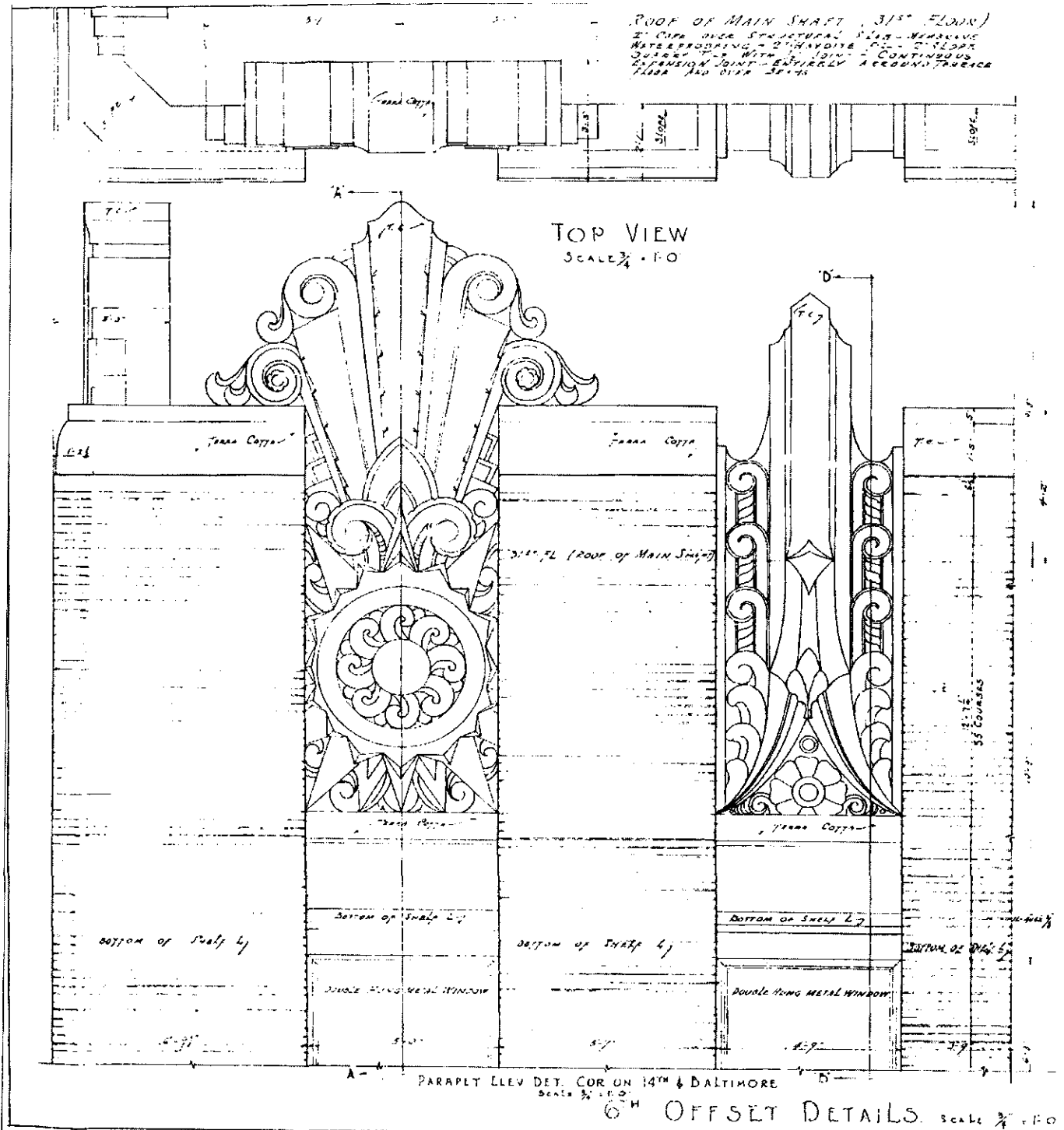
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Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO

OFFSET DETAILS



National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

**Kansas City Power and Light Company Building  
Jackson County, MO**

## LANTERN ELEVATOR ELEVATION



• HALF SECTION •







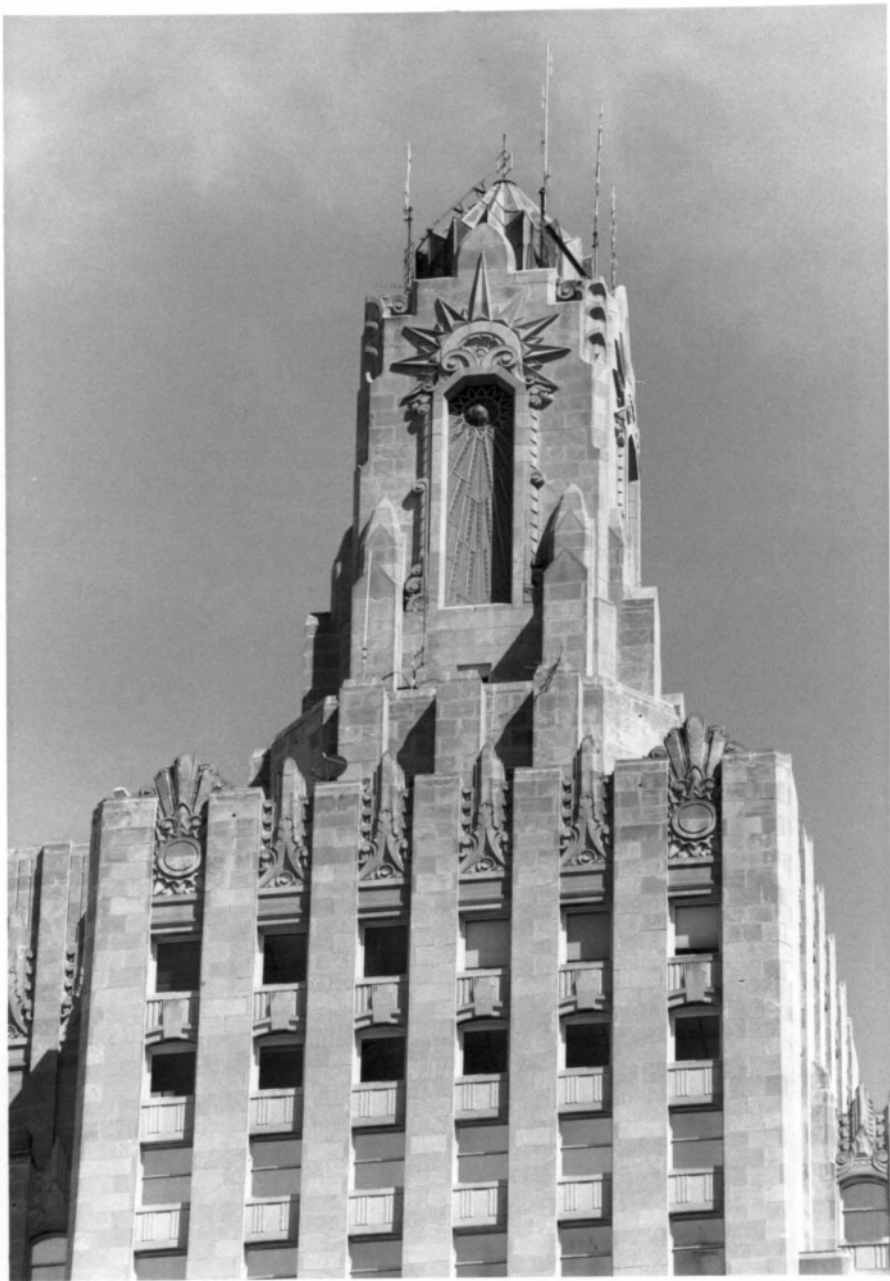
























EXTRA  
PHOTOS

KANSAS CITY POWER & LIGHT BUILDING #1 of 9  
1330 Baltimore  
Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: M. Betz  
Date: September, 1987  
Neg. Loc.: Landmarks Commission  
City Hall, 26th Floor  
414 E. 12th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

Looking north.





KANSAS CITY POWER & LIGHT BUILDING #2 of 9  
1330 Baltimore  
Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: M. Betz  
Date: September, 1987  
Neg. Loc.: Landmarks Commission  
City Hall, 26th Floor  
414 E. 12th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

Looking south.





KANSAS CITY POWER & LIGHT BUILDING #3 of 9  
1330 Baltimore  
Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: M. Betz  
Date: November, 1987  
Neg. Loc.: Landmarks Commission  
City Hall, 26th Floor  
414 E. 12th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

West facade.



KANSAS CITY POWER & LIGHT BUILDING #4 of 9  
1330 Baltimore  
Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: M. Betz  
Date: September, 1987  
Neg. Loc.: Landmarks Commission  
City Hall, 26th Floor  
414 E. 12th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

View of Cupola.



KANSAS CITY POWER & LIGHT BUILDING #5 of 9  
1330 Baltimore  
Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: M. Betz  
Date: May, 1988  
Neg. Loc.: Landmarks Commission  
City Hall, 26th Floor  
414 E. 12th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

Interior view, looking east, 1st floor.



To Pay Electric  
← Utility Bills  
INFORMATION  
→



KANSAS CITY POWER & LIGHT BUILDING #6 of 9  
1330 Baltimore  
Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: M. Betz  
Date: May, 1988  
Neg. Loc.: Landmarks Commission  
City Hall, 26th Floor  
414 E. 12th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

Interior, 2nd floor.





KANSAS CITY POWER & LIGHT BUILDING #7 of 9  
1330 Baltimore  
Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: M. Betz  
Date: May, 1988  
Neg. Loc.: Landmarks Commission  
City Hall, 26th Floor  
414 E. 12th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

Interior hallway.



KANSAS CITY POWER & LIGHT BUILDING #8 of 9  
1330 Baltimore  
Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: M. Betz  
Date: May, 1988  
Neg. Loc.: Landmarks Commission  
City Hall, 26th Floor  
414 E. 12th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

Interior mail box.

U.S. MAIL

LETTERS



KANSAS CITY POWER & LIGHT BUILDING #9 of 9  
1330 Baltimore  
Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: M. Betz  
Date: December 11, 1931  
Neg. Loc.: Landmarks Commission  
City Hall, 26th Floor  
414 E. 12th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

Exterior view looking north.





PRESIDENT

RICE

Chrysler Building  
Architects  
General Contractors